Marshall Memo 187

A Weekly Round-up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education
May 28, 2007

In This Issue:

Quotes of the Week

"College is, basically, a sleepover with grades."
Louis Menand (see item #7)

"When a colleague admonishes us to 'quit complicating the issue,' it's not just an impatient reminder to get on with the damn job – it's also a plea to keep the complexity at a comfortable level."
Roger Martin (see item #1)

"Those who make hiring decisions are frustrated with the limitations of interviews, which often become nothing more than sterile exercises in exchanging platitudes."
Douglas Reeves (see item #6)

"The brick-and-mortar school, along with teachers, should be the core for learning. But we cheat our students if we continue to think of school as a class period that begins and ends with a bell."
Eric Langhorst, Missouri teacher (see item #5)

"Study skills and learning skills are inert until they're powered by an active ingredient [a belief that working hard makes you smarter]. If you target that belief, you can see more benefit than you have any reason to hope for."
Carol Dweck (see item #2)

"You can't learn when you're afraid of being wrong."
Louis Menand (see item #7)

1. Leaders Who Thrive on Complexity to Create Better Solutions

In this thought-provoking *Harvard Business Review* article, Roger Martin, the dean of the School of Management at the University of Toronto, says that our fascination with what brilliant managers like Jack Welch *do* is misdirected. "A more productive, though more difficult, approach," according to Martin, "is to focus on *how a leader thinks* – that is, to examine the antecedent of doing, or the ways in which leaders' cognitive processes produce their actions."

Martin has interviewed more than 50 highly successful leaders and noticed a common characteristic: they are able to hold two opposing ideas in their heads at once and then, "without panicking or simply settling for one alternative or the other, they're able to creatively resolve the tension between those two ideas by generating a new one that contains elements of the others but is superior to both." He calls this *integrative thinking* and believes it is the key to exceptional organizations and the people who run them.

Martin says that integrative thinkers are usually not aware of how their minds work – they're naturals – but this kind of thinking can be learned by others. "It isn't just an ability you're born with," he says. "It's something you can hone… Integrative thinking is a 'habit of thought' that all of us can consciously develop to arrive at solutions that would otherwise not be evident."

But to develop it, we have to fight against our tendency toward either-or thinking and a powerful drive to make things simple and straightforward. "When a colleague admonishes us to 'quit complicating the issue,'" says Martin, "it's not just an impatient reminder to get on with the damn job – it's also a plea to keep the complexity at a comfortable level." He believes that all of us are capable of entertaining more than one idea at the same time, but to take advantage of that capacity, "we must resist our natural leaning toward simplicity and certainty." An uncomfortable level of uncertainty is not a bad place to be, he argues. "Integrative thinkers don't mind a messy problem. In fact, they welcome complexity, because that's where the best answers come from."

When responding to problems or challenges, leaders work through four stages: determining salience, analyzing causality, envisioning the shape of the decision, and achieving resolution. Conventional thinkers seek simplicity at each stage and as a result, they're forced to make unattractive trade-offs. By contrast, integrative thinkers welcome complexity, even if it means they have to re-do some of the steps, and this allows them to craft innovative solutions. Here's the comparison:

• Determining salience – Conventional thinkers focus only on relevant features. Integrative thinkers seek less obvious but potentially relevant factors.

• Analyzing causality – Conventional thinkers consider one-way, linear relationships between variables, in which more of A produces more of B. Integrative thinkers consider multi-directional and nonlinear relationships between variables.

• Envisioning the shape of the decision – Conventional thinkers break problems into pieces and work on them separately or sequentially. Integrative thinkers see problems as a whole, examining how the parts fit together and how decisions affect one another.

• Achieving resolution – Conventional thinkers make either-or choices, settling for the best available options. Integrative thinkers reject binary choices if they don't like either one, refuse to accept that it's either-or, creatively resolve tensions among opposing ideas, and generate innovative outcomes.

"How Successful Leaders Think" by Roger Martin in *Harvard Business Review*, June 2007 (Vol. 85, #6, p. 60-67), no e-link available; the author's e-mail is martin@rotman.utoronto.ca.

2. Carol Dweck's Work on Acquired Versus Innate Intelligence

In this article in *Stanford Magazine*, freelance writer Marina Krakovsky describes psychology professor Carol Dweck's work on achievement motivation. Originally fascinated in graduate school by the research on "learned helplessness", Dweck began to suspect that there was something else going on in people who underachieved. In the 1970s, she and a few other researchers, including Jeff Howard, had an insight that has had a profound effect on the field: people who believe intelligence is fixed do not achieve as well as those who believe intelligence is malleable. What fascinated them most was children who put forth lots of effort and didn't make negative attributions when they failed. Their attitude was, "Failure is information. This didn't work. I'm a problem solver. I'll try something else." One boy, who became a poster-child for the get-smart belief system, reacted to his first stumper by pulling up his chair, rubbing his hands together, smacking his lips, and saying, "I love a challenge."

This approach contrasts with the born-smart, performance-oriented belief system. Children in this camp, even if they're very good at things, tend to crumble when they encounter frustration and failure. They see each task as a challenge to their self-image, and each setback as a personal threat. They tend to pursue only challenges they think they can ace and avoid risks and other growth experiences. Long term, the belief that ability is fixed undermines effort and stunts achievement.

Dweck's latest study divided a number of seventh graders into two groups, both of which received help with study skills and information on how the brain works. One group was taught that the brain is like a muscle that grows stronger through exercise, and this single intervention was catalytic; students in this group had far better motivation and math grades than the control group, even though all students had received the same educational interventions. "Study skills and learning skills are inert until they're powered by an active ingredient," says Dweck. In other words, students may know how to study, but they won't

study effectively unless they believe studying will help them do better. "If you target that belief," concludes Dweck, "you can see more benefit than you have any reason to hope for." She and her colleagues have developed a computer-based training module, Brainology, to tutor students in this belief system.

But aren't there people who believe in innate ability *and* the idea that working hard improves ability? Dweck agrees that logically the two ideas aren't incompatible – but many people who believe in fixed intelligence slide into the belief that you shouldn't *need* to work hard to do well at something. Students who finish problems in ten minutes that classmates take an hour to finish tend to draw this false conclusion. "The fallacy comes when people generalize it to the belief that effort on any task, even very hard ones, implies low ability," says Dweck.

Dweck's work is now being applied to other fields. The Blackburn Rovers, a top-ranked U.K. soccer team, came to her for advice on how to combat the born-talented mindset that was undermining the team's work ethic. Peter Salovey, a Yale psychologist working in the area of emotional intelligence, says that his field is struggling against the belief that EI is largely inborn. "People say to me all the time, 'I'm not a people person,' or 'I'm not good at managing my emotions,'" Salovey says. Dweck has been thinking about the impact of the fixed-trait belief system on people's love relationships. A person who enters a relationship with a categorical, all-or-nothing belief about a partner's personality traits tends to ignore festering problems or give up on the relationship at the first sign of trouble.

Dweck is also doing work on young children's moral development. Some preschoolers believe a person is either good or bad, while others think a person can get better by being good. Dweck has found that children with the latter belief system feel all right about themselves after they've messed up and are less judgmental of others. They're also more likely to try to set things right and learn from their mistakes. If a classmate spills juice or throws toys, these malleable-goodness children are more willing to forgive and forget as long as the malefactor cleans up and resolves to do better next time.

"The Effort Effect" by Marina Krakovsky in *Stanford Magazine*, March/April 2007, available at http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2007/marapr/features/dweck.html, spotted in *American School Board Journal*, June 2007 (Vol. 194, #6, p. 10); Dweck's latest book is *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Random House, 2006)

3. Teaching Debating in Middle-School Content-Area Classes

In this detailed and helpful article in *Middle School Journal*, Texas middle-school teacher Elizabeth Martens makes the case for using debate and argumentation in content-area classes, provides some basic definitions and terminology, and gives step-by-step advice for integrating debate in the classroom.

The benefits of debate

Fifth grade is not too early for semi-formal debating, says Martens, and she lists the ways it can help students academically and personally:

- It helps develop critical thinking and analytical skills;

- It links facts to ideas and helps gather information and make connections;
- It authenticates and deepens content-area knowledge;
- It improves speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills;
- Because middle-school students love to argue, it helps them overcome their awkwardness and embarrassment and find their "voice";
- It helps students learn to think on their feet, quickly identifying issues and responses in their heads;
- It helps them consider differing points of view and begin to make sense of their place in the world.

But if they are left to their own devices, says Martens, most middle-school students will "wing" debating. The bulk of her article spells out the way she believes teachers need to shape the process to get the maximum academic and personal benefit for students.

The basic components of debate

Argument, she says, "is the offering of reasons and evidence in support of a conclusion." In debate, an argument is used to prove a point or to persuade someone to adopt one position over another – always through the use of reasons and reasoning. Debate can be boiled down to the acronym A.R.E. – Assertion, Reason/Reasoning Process, Evidence:

• *Assertion* – Debate begins with a statement that claims something is true but doesn't offer reasons or evidence, for example, "Global warming is an immediate threat to our well-being" or "The U.S. was right to invade Iraq."

• *Reasons* – This is the "because…" part of the argument, providing reasons that are relevant and directly related to the assertion and prove the point, for example, "The death penalty should be eliminated because innocent people are put to death."

• *Reasoning process* – Listing the reasons for an assertion is not enough; they have to be tied them together in a way that strengthens the argument:

Assertion + Reason + Reasoning = Argument

There are four types of reasoning:

- Reasoning by example or from a generalization – for example, middle-school students who perform community service are more empathetic to the concerns of others; middle-school students who perform community service are more likely to undertake leadership roles in the community; therefore, community service plays a valuable role in the education and development of middle-school students.
- Reasoning by analogy – for example, the U.S. lost the war in Vietnam because we tried to impose democracy on a dissimilar and unstable culture; in the war in Iraq, the U.S. is trying to impose democracy on a dissimilar and unstable culture; therefore, it is not likely that the U.S. will succeed in Iraq.
- Causal reasoning – showing a cause-and-effect link between two things, for example, reading a paper aloud helps a student pick up forgotten words and awkward phrases; reading a paper aloud helps a student recognize the need to reorganize thoughts and

ideas; therefore, the practice of reading papers aloud during the editing process is beneficial and should be encouraged.

- Cost-benefit reasoning – weighing the harmful consequences, inefficiencies, economic costs, etc. against the positives, for example, Our prison system is inadequate due to overcrowding and high recidivism among nonviolent offenders; efforts to rehabilitate nonviolent offenders would reduce prison overcrowding and high recidivism; the costs of rehabilitation may be less expensive than the costs of incarceration and building new prisons; therefore, the benefits of rehabilitation outweigh the costs.

• *Evidence* – This backs up reasons and reasoning with hard facts, expert opinions, and statistics, which means it's important for students to be able to tell the differences among them. So the overall argument looks like this:

Assertion + Reason and Evidence + Reasoning = Argument

<u>A step-by-step guide to using debate in the classroom</u>

Martens suggests starting students off with an informal debating format, following these steps:

• *Choosing a topic* – To have a good debate, it's important to have a meaningful, two-sided topic that has two legitimate and clearly differing positions. It's also important to define big terms that will be used. Here are some possibilities:

Policy issues:

- The city should allow the homeless to sleep on the streets.
- Parents should not buy toy guns for their children.
- Middle-school students should have access to soda and vending machines in school.
- Animals should not be used to test new medicines and products.
- Student athletes should be required to earn good grades to participate in sports.
- The death penalty should be abolished.
- The U.S. should build a wall to prevent illegal immigrants from entering.

Value issues:

- Dictatorship is better than weak democracy.
- The Internet shuts down human interaction.
- War is never justified.
- It is justifiable to steal from the rich and give to the poor.
- Professional athletes are overpaid.
- The pen is mightier than the sword.

• *Brainstorming* – Before preparing their arguments, students need to tease out the implications of their topic. For example, if the topic is the death penalty, brainstorming notes should include:

- Social implications – the perpetrator's family versus the victim's family; prison and community safety and security;
- Economic implications –the costs of execution versus death row; costs of appeals;

- Cultural – the history of attitudes and beliefs, the ethnic/gender/economic breakdown of those executed;
- Moral and religious – the value of life, concept of mercy/grace/judgment; justification of killing;
- Philosophical – how does this relate to our idea of justice?

Having articulated these implications, students should formulate questions to drive their debating points and reasoning, for example:

- What rights does the victim's family have in seeking final resolution?
- What are the costs of incarceration for life compared with the costs of death row and execution?
- When has the U.S. abolished the death penalty in the past? Why?
- Is the death penalty applied unjustly or unfairly? Are innocent people put to death? Are members of any racial/ethnic group executed disproportionately?
- Is it moral to kill another human being, even when the person has killed another?

Students can then write their contentions and begin to put together their speeches.

• *Deciding on the parties* – In a debate, there's a pro side (the affirmative) and a con side (the negative). It's common to have three speakers on each side, the first two on each side to give constructive speeches and the third to handle rebuttal.

• *Formulating the resolution* – The next step is to write the proposition, motion, or resolution that's being debated, for example, "Resolved, that all middle-school students should be required to wear uniforms." There are three kinds: policy resolutions, value resolutions (see above), and fact resolutions (which can be empirically proven).

• *Preparing arguments* – Martens has a helpful list of suggestions for students, which could be a guidebook to critical thinking and good reasoning:

- Back up your opinion with reasons other than "because I think so." Mere opinions are unhelpful, she says. "If I try to argue against your opinion, it is like arguing against you personally, which gets us nowhere."
- Reasons should be relevant to the issue, related to available evidence or experience, and take different viewpoints into consideration.
- Reasons are evaluated by their clarity, accuracy, relevance, logic, precision, justifiability, significance, depth, and breadth.
- Argue by explicit inferences, not from assumptions (i.e., something follows deductively or inductively from real facts or observations).

• *Giving the speeches* – The formal structure of speeches helps students listen and wait their turn and resist the urge to parry and thrust. There are three stages:

- Constructive speeches – each side presents its argument;
- Rebuttal speeches – each side rebuts the other's points;
- Clash – when each side has disputed or refuted the other's arguments.

Speeches take place in a set format with time limits, for example:

- Affirmative Speaker A, constructive speech – 4 minutes
- Negative Speaker A, constructive speech – 4 minutes

- Affirmative Speaker B, constructive speech – 4 minutes
- Negative Speaker B, constructive speech – 4 minutes
- Affirmative Speaker C, rebuttal – 3 minutes
- Negative Speaker C, rebuttal – 3 minutes

During speeches, students cannot be interrupted, but an opposing student can raise a point of information after the first minute and before the last minute of a constructive speech, standing up with one palm extended and waiting to be recognized. The speaker may recognize the point of information (in which case the questioner has 15 seconds to speak) or decline it (in which case the student must sit down, but can try again later).

• *Formalities* – For speeches, teachers may want adopt certain conventions, such as having students address each other as Mr. or Miss/Ms, or "My Distinguished Opponent, Ms. Smith." Some debates also allow students to "heckle" positively (by light tapping on the tabletop or shaking a triumphant fist in the air), or negatively (by hissing quietly or turning thumbs down).

• *Listening and note-taking* – Martens says the most difficult part of classroom debates for eager middle-school students is getting them to listen to opposing arguments and take notes – but these are both vital parts of high-quality debates.

• *Evaluating the debate* – Martens suggests that classroom debates should be evaluated, not judged. This can be disappointing to middle-school students, who may want a "winner" declared at the end. A simple rubric can be used to score debaters on a 5-4-3-2-1 scale:

- Presentation/oratory skills
- Organization/clarity
- At least two communicated contentions
- Relevant reasons given to support contentions
- Relevant examples, facts, and other evidence given to support reasons
- Relevant and effective points of information
- Relevant and effective rebuttal

"The Instructional Use of Argument Across the Curriculum" by Elizabeth Martens in *Middle School Journal*, May 2007 (Vol. 38, #5, p. 4-13), no e-link available; the author can be reached at emartens@sasaustin.org

4. Effective School-Wide Programs to Stop Bullying

(Originally titled "How We Treat One Another in School")

In this article in *Educational Leadership*, New England educators Donna San Antonio and Elizabeth Salzfass report that the biggest worries among students entering middle schools are (a) not having any friends, and (b) being made fun of. In a survey of seventh and eighth graders in a big-city, small-city, and rural middle school, the authors found widespread bullying, particularly of students seen as being overweight, poorly dressed, gay, "different", or "weird". Students said they could not count on adults to prevent bullying and intervene when it

occurred. San Antonio and Salzfass believe that adults hold the keys to creating a safe and accepting climate for all students. They suggest the following steps:

• *Conduct an assessment*. Find out where, when, and how bullying is taking place so that anti-bullying efforts can be targeted to the school's particular circumstances.

• *Create a committee on in-school social dynamics*. The committee should include staff, students, parents, and community members and look at the broader social scene.

• *Implement an anti-bullying policy*. This should include a definition of bullying; a school-wide commitment to address the issue; a statement of rights and responsibilities for everyone in the school; the ways students and staff will identify and respond to bullying; how the administration will respond; and a way to measure how well anti-bullying efforts are working.

• *Recognize and name all types of bullying*, which can range from blatant comments about racial, ethnic, or social groups to below-the-radar whispering, rumor-spreading, and exclusion. As one seventh-grade girl put it, "Teachers do everything, I think, in their power, but if they would just listen to the person who says they're being bullied, instead of just saying 'stay away from them' or 'ignore it' maybe we would see some change."

• *Train all school employees*. Everyone, including custodians, clerical and cafeteria staff, and bus drivers, should know how to spot bullying and follow up.

• *Help students who are bullied.* Victims need to be heard, either in one-on-one or group sessions. This is particularly important for students who have experienced unfairness or violence at home.

• *Work with bullies*. Once identified, perpetrators need consequences and counseling. One approach that has proved effective is pair counseling, in which two students who are having difficulty with peer relationships meet with a counselor to negotiate differences and learn how to be a friend.

• *Name and reclaim goodness*. "In our effort to mitigate negative student behavior," write San Antonio and Salzfass, "a commonly overlooked but essential aspect of creating emotionally and socially safe environments is noticing, acknowledging, and actively drawing out acts of kindness… Some students risk their own social standing by being kind to an 'unpopular' classmate. Some students talk with others who appear lonely and try to offer friendship; they speak up when they see injustice…"

• *Integrate social-emotional education into the curriculum*. The authors suggest the following criteria for choosing an effective program:

- It should become part of a school and community discussion about values, beliefs about how to treat one another, and policies that reflect these values – specifically how adults in the school will respond when bullying occurs.
- It should pose developmentally and culturally appropriate social dilemmas for discussion and address all types of bullying.
- It should teach students how to resolve tensions and disagreements nonviolently and without losing face.

- It should challenge the idea that aggression and bullying are inevitable and expected behavior among students – and the idea that the victim's behavior causes bullying.
- It should foster critical thinking by students and reject stereotypes about bullying, such as the idea that boys use physical aggression and girls use relational aggression.
- It should help children look critically at popular culture and link in-school bullying to broader issues of social injustice.
- It should encourage students to speak up about bullying and help them generate realistic and credible ways to stay safe.

San Antonio and Salzfass list the following resources for programs to combat bullying:

- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): http://www.casel.org.
- The Safetyzone project at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory: http://www.safetyzone.org/index.html.
- The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program at http://www.clemson.edu/olweus.
- Peace Games at http://peacegames.org.
- Committee for Children at http://www.cfchildren.org.

"How We Treat One Another in School" by Donna San Antonio and Elizabeth Salzfass in *Educational Leadership*, May 2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 32-38); the full article is available free at http://www.ascd.org (click on Publications and navigate to this issue). The authors can be reached at sanantdo@gse.harvard.edu and lizzie.salzfass@gmail.com.

5. Missouri Educators Use Podcasts to Reach and Excite Their Students

(Originally titled "After the Bell, Beyond the Walls")

In this helpful *Educational Leadership* article, 8th-grade teacher Eric Langhorst describes three ways that he and his colleagues have used technology to improve their teaching:

• *Online review* – Langhorst dipped his toe into a new teaching medium when he recorded himself doing 15-minute unit-test review sessions and posted them online for his students (using Audacity, a free audio-editing program). These "StudyCasts" were an instant hit; students found they could download Langhorst's suggestions onto their MP3 players and listen while they walked the dog, did chores around the house, exercised, or rode in the car – and could go back and listen to something a second time. Students pestered other teachers to post similar audio review material.

• *A virtual book club* – Encouraged by students' reactions, Langhorst and his colleagues created a Weblog to get their students thinking about and discussing *Guerrilla Season*, a novel about Civil War events in their part of Missouri. Using Blogger, a free Weblog publishing tool, the teachers created a place where 300 students could log in (from school, home, or the library, using pen-names) and converse with each other and with Pat Hughes, the book's author, as they read the novel. Over a period of four weeks, Langhorst posted discussion questions on the blog, screened and posted students' running commentary and questions, and added images, interviews with the author, and e-links related to the novel. Langhorst also added others to the

online discussion – an 8th-grade language arts class in California, a Louisiana college professor, and others in the U.S. and other countries – as well as the president of the local school board.

"Student reaction was incredible," reports Langhorst. "One student read the book with her father; together they posted questions to the author. Another student read the book with her grandmother, who lives in a different state. This project became more than just reading a historical novel – it became an experience that more than 300 students shared with both the author and the community." Pat Hughes described how she had done her research, how she used the Internet, and how she caught a mistake just before publication.

As they proceeded through the novel, teachers noticed that students with learning disabilities were struggling to keep up with the assigned readings. So a special-education teacher recorded the book one chapter at a time and (with the author's permission) posted the recordings so that learning-disabled students could listen to them on their MP3 players. "The audio component empowered the students," writes Langhorst, "enabling them to fully participate with their peers in a reading project – an unprecedented experience for them." These students also did their final project in audio format, recording mock interviews with one of the books' characters.

Langhorst thought about whether this kind of experience with a book could eclipse conventional reading. Not so, he thinks. "My students still curled up on the couch and read *Guerrilla Season*; some students brought the book with them to lunch to read a couple of pages between bites. However, later on they could go to the blog and join in lively discussions with other students, adults, and the author herself. Technology didn't kill the book; it gave it more life and enabled it to grow beyond individual experience."

• *Involving experts* – Langhorst also used weblogs when he taught the tragedy of the Donner Party to his history classes. He e-mailed experts on the subject and found three professors who were willing to judge the merits of short student debates on the subject posted on the Web. Groups of students recorded their debates (two minutes to share their evidence and one minute for rebuttal) and the experts gave detailed feedback online – and also commended the students' efforts. Students gained a much richer understanding of this historical event by sharing their arguments and getting critiqued in real time by authorities in the field.

The biggest virtue of using technology this way, concludes Langhorst, is the way it extends the school day and includes all students. "I would encourage teachers to discuss with their students how to make content more accessible through technologies that students regularly use," he writes. "The brick-and-mortar school, along with teachers, should be the core for learning. But we cheat our students if we continue to think of school as a class period that begins and ends with a bell."

"After the Bell, Beyond the Walls" by Eric Langhorst in *Educational Leadership*, May 2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 74-77); this article can be purchased at http://www.ascd.org (click on Publications and navigate to this issue). The author can be reached at elanghorst@k12.mo.us.

6. Douglas Reeves Suggests Three Interviewing Approaches

(Originally titled "New Ways to Hire Educators")

"Those who make hiring decisions are frustrated with the limitations of interviews, which often become nothing more than sterile exercises in exchanging platitudes." So says author/consultant Douglas Reeves in this thoughtful *Educational Leadership* article, listing the types of responses that interview committees often have to sit through: "I like people." "I guess I am a bit of a perfectionist." "I have a tendency to work too hard." Reeves suggests ways to get past the baloney and really learn about potential teachers' and principals' attitudes, beliefs, and professional practices:

• *Have candidates observe several different classrooms and ask them, "What did you notice?"* This reveals whether candidates pick up on important characteristics of instruction and classroom environment, their attitudes about student learning, whether they talk about factors that are under the school's control (versus external factors like poverty) – and whether they are comfortable around students.

• *Have candidates make sense of student achievement data*. One Midwestern superintendent has teacher and principal candidates arrive an hour before the actual interview and study a rich array of data on student achievement and demographics from two different classrooms – one high-achieving and the other low-achieving. When the interview begins, the superintendent asks candidates to analyze the two classrooms – and watches to see whether they focus on student characteristics or key differences in instruction, curriculum, and assessment. "Every interviewee will dutifully declare that 'All children can learn' and swear that he or she believes in equity," says Reeves. "But the candidates who are likely to be the most effective teachers or school principals will focus their attention on the actions of schools rather than demographic characteristics of students."

• *Have candidates comment on student work with respect to state or district standards*. To make this process even more telling, Reeves suggests giving candidates samples of work from a single anonymous student, but labeling each sample with a different fictitious, racially identifiable name – Ted Hunter, Shaneequa Coleman, Jennifer Chen, and César Martinez. Interviewers can tell a lot about candidates who score the work of black and Hispanic candidates lower – or higher. "Both responses reflect the same problematic thinking dressed up in different clothing," says Reeves.

"New Ways to Hire Educators" by Douglas Reeves in *Educational Leadership*, May 2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 83-84); the full article is available free at http://www.ascd.org (click on Publications, navigate to this issue). Reeves can be reached at DReeves@LeadAndLearn.com.

7. How Is College Like a Sleepover?

In a lead commentary in *The New Yorker*, Louis Menand starts off with this riff on childhood, and we wonder where he's going with it: "On your first sleepover, your best friend's mother asks if you would like a tuna-fish-salad sandwich. Your own mother gives you tuna-fish-salad sandwiches all the time, so you say, 'Sure.' When you bite into the sandwich, though, you realize, too late, that your best friend's mother's tuna-fish salad tastes nothing like

the tuna-fish salad your mother makes. You never dreamed that it was possible for there to be more than one way to prepare tuna-fish salad. And what's with the bread? It's brown, and appears to have tiny seeds in it. What is more unnerving is the fact that your best friend obviously considers his mother's tuna-fish salad to be perfectly normal and has been eating it with enjoyment all his life. Later on, you discover that the pillows in your best friend's house are filled with some kind of foam-rubber stuff instead of feathers. The toilet paper is pink. What kind of human beings are these? At two o'clock in the morning, you throw up, and your mother comes and takes you home."

"College," continues Menand, "is, basically, a sleepover with grades." It's a stressful experience for most students, and almost half undergo some form of mental or bodily distress and drop out of college forever. "What makes for the stress is meritocracy," says Menand. "Meritocratic systems are democratic (since, in theory, everyone gets a place at the starting line) and efficient (since resources are not wasted on the unqualified), but they are huge engines of anxiety… Your mother can't come over and help you out – that would be cheating! You're on your own. Everything you do in a meritocratic society is some kind of test, and there is never a final exam. There is only another test. People seem to pick up on this earlier and earlier in their lives, and at some point it starts to get in the way of their becoming educated. You can't learn when you're afraid of being wrong."

"The Graduates" by Louis Menand in *The New Yorker*, May 21, 2007 (p. 27-28), no e-link available

8. The Benefits of a Longer School Day

(Originally titled "A New Day for Kids")

In this *Educational Leadership* article, Boston-based research director David Farbman describes the benefits of a state-funded program that has added two hours to the school day of ten Massachusetts schools this year:

• *The extra time allows teachers to dig deeper into the content*. One K-8 school added 30 minutes a day to math (now 75 minutes) and 30 minutes to English/language arts (now 180 minutes). "Academic classes look and feel different," reports Farbman, with better integration of project-based learning across the curriculum, more frequent implementation of creative activities in the TERC Investigations math program, time for systematic instruction in math vocabulary (which teachers had identified as a barrier to higher achievement), and fuller use of the Literacy Collaborative program's key components: readers' workshop, writers' workshop, and word study. Science was also restored to a prominent spot in the daily curriculum.

• *Electives are now possible*. Students take part in drama, film-making, urban gardening, and martial arts electives, work with local artists, and take advantage of field trips to cultural sites.

• *The social-emotional curriculum can be beefed up*. One K-8 school now has 30-minute class meetings every day to implement the Responsive Classroom program. The principal of this school reports that office referrals have dropped dramatically.

• *Days are less hectic*. "The daily rhythms of school life seem less harried," says Farbman. "Students and teachers have time to work through problems together, ask and answer questions, and work in teams… [L]onger classes have given teachers the extra minutes they need to describe a concept in greater detail or help students learn from one another. As these teachable moments accumulate, students inevitably benefit."

"A New Day for Kids" by David Farbman in *Educational Leadership*, May 2007 (Vol. 64, #8, p. 62-65); to purchase this article, go to http://www.ascd.org, click on Publications, and navigate to this issue. The author can be reached at david@mass2020.org.

9. Short Item:

Twins – Separate or together in school? – In this article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, reporter Tim Grant says there is increasing conflict between parents and schools about whether twins and other multiples should be in different classrooms. Many school districts separate twins as early as first grade in the belief that this helps them develop as individuals, but parents often don't agree and are going political. Twenty-one states have now passed or are considering legislation on twins or other multiples in schools.

"Schools Can't Agree What To Do About Twins" by Tim Grant in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 2007, http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07141/787793-298.stm, spotted in *PEN Weekly NewsBlast*, May 25, 2007

Do you have feedback? Is anything missing?

If you have comments or suggestions, if you saw an article or web item in the last week that you think should have been summarized, or if you would like to suggest additional publications that should be covered by the Marshall Memo, please e-mail: kim.marshall8@verizon.net

About the Marshall Memo

Mission and focus:

This weekly memo is designed to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and others very well-informed on current research and effective practices in K-12 education. Kim Marshall, drawing on 36 years' experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, and writer, lightens the load of busy educators by serving as their "designated reader."

To produce the Marshall Memo, Kim subscribes to 44 carefully-chosen publications (see list to the right), sifts through more than a hundred articles each week, and selects 5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning. He then writes a brief summary of each article, pulls out several striking quotes, provides e-links to full articles when available, and e-mails the memo to subscribers every Monday (with occasional breaks; there are about 50 issues a year).

Subscriptions:

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- Publications read
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- Headlines for all issues
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- About Kim Marshall (including links to articles)
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- The current issue (in PDF or Word format)
- All back issues (also in PDF or Word)
- A database of all articles to date, searchable by topic, title, author, source, level, etc.
- How to change access e-mail or password

Publications covered

Those read this week are underlined.

American Educator
American School Board Journal
ASCD, CEC SmartBriefs
Atlantic Monthly
Catalyst Chicago
CommonWealth Magazine
Daily EdNews
Ed. Magazine
EDge
Education Digest
Education Gadfly
Education Next
Education Week
Educational Leadership
Educational Researcher
Edutopia
Elementary School Journal
Essential Teacher (TESOL)
Harvard Business Review
Harvard Education Letter
Harvard Educational Review
JESPAR
Journal of Staff Development
Language Learner (NABE)
Middle Ground
Middle School Journal
NASSP Bulletin
New York Times
New Yorker
Newsweek
PEN Weekly NewsBlast
Phi Delta Kappan
Principal
Principal Leadership
Principal's Research Review
Reading Research Quarterly
Reading Today
Rethinking Schools
Review of Educational Research
Teachers College Record
TESOL Quarterly
Theory Into Practice
Times Educational Supplement, Magazine
Tools for Schools